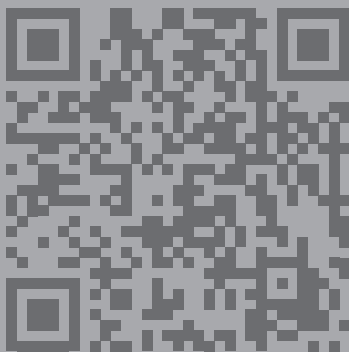
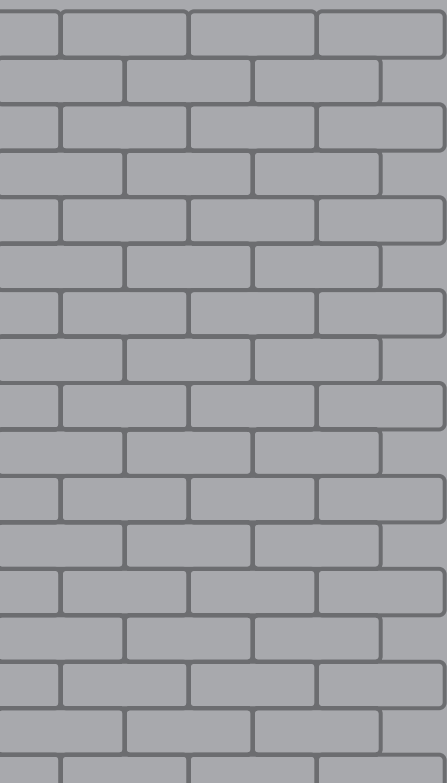


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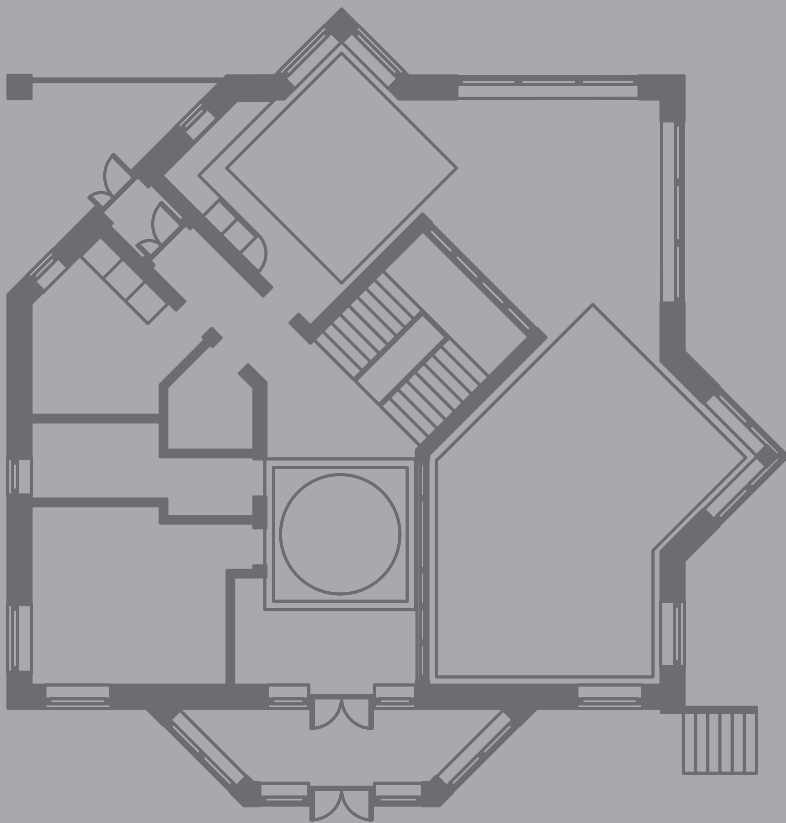
NOT HERE



VOL 19 NO 2 VOLUME EDITORS **LANFRANCO ACETI** AND **RICHARD RINEHART**

EDITORS **ÖZDEN ŞAHİN**, **JONATHAN MUNRO** AND **CATHERINE M. WEIR**

This LEA publication has a simple goal: surveying the current trends in augmented reality artistic interventions. There is no other substantive academic collection currently available, and it is with a certain pride that LEA presents this volume which provides a snapshot of current trends as well as a moment of reflection on the future of AR interventions.



NOT THERE



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LEA PUBLISHING & SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Editor in Chief

Lanfranco Aceti lanfranco.aceti@leoalmanac.org

Co-Editor

Özden Şahin ozden.sahin@leoalmanac.org

Managing Editor

John Francescutti john.francescutti@leoalmanac.org

Art Director

Deniz Cem Öndüğü deniz.onduygu@leoalmanac.org

Editorial Board

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Editorial Address

Leonardo Electronic Almanac

Sabancı University, Orhanlı – Tuzla, 34956

Istanbul, Turkey

Email

info@leoalmanac.org

Web

- » www.leoalmanac.org
- » www.twitter.com/LEA_twitts
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LEONARDO ELECTRONIC ALMANAC, VOLUME 19 ISSUE 2

Not Here Not There

VOLUME EDITORS

LANFRANCO ACETI AND RICHARD RINEHART

EDITORS

ÖZDEN ŞAHİN, JONATHAN MUNRO AND CATHERINE M. WEIR

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Not Here, Not There: An Analysis Of An International Collaboration To Survey Augmented Reality Art

Every published volume has a reason, a history, a conceptual underpinning as well as an aim that ultimately the editor or editors wish to achieve. There is also something else in the creation of a volume; that is the larger goal shared by the community of authors, artists and critics that take part in it.

This volume of LEA titled *Not Here, Not There* had a simple goal: surveying the current trends in augmented reality artistic interventions. There is no other substantive academic collection currently available, and it is with a certain pride that both, Richard Rinehart and myself, look at this endeavor. Collecting papers and images, answers to interviews as well as images and artists' statements and putting it all together is perhaps a small milestone; nevertheless I believe that this will be a seminal collection which will showcase the trends and dangers that augmented reality as an art form faces in the second decade of the XXIst century.

As editor, I did not want to shy away from more critical essays and opinion pieces, in order to create a documentation that reflects the status of the current thinking. That these different tendencies may or may not be proved right in the future is not the reason for the collection, instead what I believe is important and relevant is to create a historical snapshot by focusing on the artists and authors developing artistic practices and writing on augmented reality. For this reason, Richard and I posed to the contributors a series of questions that in the variegated responses of the artists and authors will evidence and stress similari-

ties and differences, contradictions and behavioral approaches. The interviews add a further layer of documentation which, linked to the artists' statements, provides an overall understanding of the hopes for this new artistic playground or new media extension. What I personally wanted to give relevance to in this volume is the artistic creative process. I also wanted to evidence the challenges faced by the artists in creating artworks and attempting to develop new thinking and innovative aesthetic approaches.

The whole volume started from a conversation that I had with Tamiko Thiel – that was recorded in Istanbul at Kasa Gallery and that led to a curatorial collaboration with Richard. The first exhibition *Not Here* at the Samek Art Gallery, curated by Richard Reinhart, was juxtaposed to a response from Kasa Gallery with the exhibition *Not There*, in Istanbul. The conversations between Richard and myself produced this final volume – *Not Here, Not There* – which we both envisaged as a collection of authored papers, artists' statements, artworks, documentation and answers to some of the questions that we had as curators. This is the reason why we kept the same questions for all of the interviews – in order to create the basis for a comparative analysis of different aesthetics, approaches and processes of the artists that work in augmented reality.

When creating the conceptual structures for this collection my main personal goal was to develop a link – or better to create the basis for a link – between ear-

lier artistic interventions in the 1960s and the current artistic interventions of artists that use augmented reality.

My historical artist of reference was Yayoi Kusama and the piece that she realized for the Venice Biennial in 1966 titled *Narcissus Garden*. The artwork was a happening and intervention at the Venice Biennial; Kusama was obliged to stop selling her work by the biennial's organizers for 'selling art too cheaply.'

"In 1966 [...] she went uninvited to the Venice Biennale. There, dressed in a golden kimono, she filled the lawn outside the Italian pavilion with 1,500 mirrored balls, which she offered for sale for 1,200 lire apiece. The authorities ordered her to stop, deeming it unacceptable to 'sell art like hot dogs or ice cream cones.'" ¹

The conceptualization and interpretation of this gesture by critics and art historians is that of a guerrilla action that challenged the commercialization of the art system and that involved the audience in a process that revealed the complicit nature and behaviors of the viewers as well as use controversy and publicity as an integral part of the artistic practice.

Kusama's artistic legacy can perhaps be resumed in these four aspects: a) engagement with audience's behaviors, b) issues of art economy and commercialization, c) rogue interventions in public spaces and d) publicity and notoriety.

These are four elements that characterize the work practices and artistic approaches – in a variety of combinations and levels of importance – of contem-

1. David Pilling, "The World According to Yayoi Kusama," *The Financial Times*, January 20, 2012, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/52ab168a-4188-11e1-8c33-00144feab49a.html#axzz1kDck8Rzm> (accessed March 1, 2013).

porary artists that use augmented reality as a medium. Here, is not perhaps the place to focus on the role of 'publicity' in art history and artistic practices, but a few words have to be spent in order to explain that publicity for AR artworks is not solely a way for the artist to gain notoriety, but an integral part of the artwork, which in order to come into existence and generate interactions and engagements with the public has to be communicated to the largest possible audience.

"By then, Kusama was widely assumed to be a publicity hound, who used performance mainly as a way of gaining media exposure." ² The publicity obsession, or the accusation of being a 'publicity hound' could be easily moved to the contemporary group of artists that use augmented reality. Their invasions of spaces, juxtapositions, infringements could be defined as nothing more than publicity stunts that have little to do with art. These accusations would not be just irrelevant but biased – since – as in the case of Sander Veenhof's analysis in this collection – the linkage between the existence of the artwork as an invisible presence and its physical manifestation and engagement with the audience can only happen through knowledge, through the audience's awareness of the existence of the art piece itself that in order to achieve its impact as an artwork necessitates to be publicized.

Even if, I do not necessarily agree with the idea of a 'necessary manifestation' and audience's knowledge of the artwork – I believe that an artistic practice that is unknown is equally valid – I can nevertheless understand the process, function and relations that have to be established in order to develop a form of engagement and interaction between the AR artwork and the audience. To condemn the artists who seek publicity

2. Isabelle Loring Wallace and Jennie Hirsh, *Contemporary Art & Classical Myth* (Farnham; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 94.

in order to gather audiences to make the artworks come alive is perhaps a shortsighted approach that does not take into consideration the audience's necessity of knowing that interaction is possible in order for that interaction to take place.

What perhaps should be analyzed in different terms is the evolution of art in the second part of the XXth century, as an activity that is no longer and can no longer be rescinded from publicity, since audience engagement requires audience attendance and attendance can be obtained only through communication / publicity. The existence of the artwork – in particular of the successful AR artwork – is strictly measured in numbers: numbers of visitors, numbers of interviews, numbers of news items, numbers of talks, numbers of interactions, numbers of clicks, and, perhaps in a not too distant future, numbers of coins gained. The issue of being a 'publicity hound' is not a problem that applies to artists alone, from Andy Warhol to Damien Hirst from Banksy to Maurizio Cattelan, it is also a method of evaluation that affects art institutions and museums alike. The accusation moved to AR artists of being media whores – is perhaps contradictory when arriving from institutional art forms, as well as galleries and museums that have celebrated publicity as an element of the performative character of both artists and artworks and an essential element instrumental to the institutions' very survival.

The publicity stunts of the augmented reality interventions today are nothing more than an acquired methodology borrowed from the second part of the XXth century. This is a stable methodology that has already been widely implemented by public and private art institutions in order to promote themselves and their artists.

Publicity and community building have become an artistic methodology that AR artists are playing with by

making use of their better knowledge of the AR media. Nevertheless, this is knowledge born out of necessity and scarcity of means, and at times appears to be more effective than the institutional messages arriving from well-established art organizations. I should also add that publicity is functional in AR interventions to the construction of a community – a community of aficionados, similar to the community of 'nudists' that follows Spencer Tunic for his art events / human installation.

I think what is important to remember in the analysis of the effectiveness both in aesthetic and participatory terms of augmented reality artworks – is not their publicity element, not even their sheer numbers (which, by the way, are what has made these artworks successful) but their quality of disruption.

The ability to use – in Marshall McLuhan's terms – the medium as a message in order to impose content by-passing institutional control is the most exciting element of these artworks. It is certainly a victory that a group of artists – by using alternative methodological approaches to what are the structures of the capitalistic system, is able to enter into that very capitalistic system in order to become institutionalized and perhaps – in the near future – be able to make money in order to make art.

Much could be said about the artist's need of fitting within a capitalist system or the artist's moral obligation to reject the basic necessities to ensure an operational professional existence within contemporary capitalistic structures. This becomes, in my opinion, a question of personal ethics, artistic choices and existential social dramas. Let's not forget that the vast majority of artists – and AR artists in particular – do not have large sums and do not impinge upon national budgets as much as banks, financial institutions, militaries and corrupt politicians. They work for years

with small salaries, holding multiple jobs and making personal sacrifices; and the vast majority of them does not end up with golden parachutes or golden handshakes upon retirement nor causes billions of damage to society.

The current success of augmented reality interventions is due in small part to the nature of the medium. Museums and galleries are always on the lookout for 'cheap' and efficient systems that deliver art engagement, numbers to satisfy the donors and the national institutions that support them, artworks that deliver visibility for the gallery and the museum, all of it without requiring large production budgets. Forgetting that art is also about business, that curating is also about managing money, it means to gloss over an important element – if not the major element – that an artist has to face in order to deliver a vision.

Augmented reality artworks bypass these financial challenges, like daguerreotypes did by delivering a cheaper form of portraiture than oil painting in the first part of the XIXth century, or like video did in the 1970s and like digital screens and projectors have done in the 1990s until now, offering cheaper systems to display moving as well as static images. AR in this sense has a further advantage from the point of view of the gallery – the gallery has no longer a need to purchase hardware because audiences bring their own hardware: their mobile phones.

The materiality of the medium, its technological revolutionary value, in the case of early augmented reality artworks plays a pivotal role in order to understand its success. It is ubiquitous, can be replicated everywhere in the world, can be installed with minimal hassle and can exist, independently from the audience, institutions and governmental permissions. Capital costs for AR installations are minimal, in the order of a few

hundred dollars, and they lend themselves to collaborations based on global networks.

Problems though remain for the continued success of augmented reality interventions. Future challenges are in the materialization of the artworks for sale, to name an important one. Unfortunately, unless the relationship between collectors and the 'object' collected changes in favor of immaterial objects, the problem to overcome for artists that use augmented reality intervention is how and in what modalities to link the AR installations with the process of production of an object to be sold.

Personally I believe that there are enough precedents that AR artists could refer to, from Christo to Marina Abramovich, in order develop methods and frameworks to present AR artworks as collectable and sellable material objects. The artists' ability to do so, to move beyond the fractures and barriers of institutional vs. revolutionary, retaining the edge of their aesthetics and artworks, is what will determine their future success.

These are the reasons why I believe that this collection of essays will prove to be a piece, perhaps a small piece, of future art history, and why in the end it was worth the effort.

Lanfranco Aceti

Editor in Chief, *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*
Director, Kasa Gallery



Site, Non-site, and Website

In the 1960's, artist Robert Smithson articulated the strategy of representation summarized by "site vs. non-site" whereby certain artworks were simultaneously abstract and representational and could be site-specific without being sited. A pile of rocks in a gallery is an "abstract" way to represent their site of origin. In the 1990's net.art re-de-materialized the art object and found new ways to suspend the artwork online between website and non-site. In the 21st century, new technologies suggest a reconsideration of the relationship between the virtual and the real. "Hardlinks" such as QR codes attempt to bind a virtual link to our physical environment.

Throughout the 1970's, institutional critique brought political awareness and social intervention to the site of the museum. In the 1980's and 90's, street artist such as Banksy went in the opposite direction, critiquing the museum by siting their art beyond its walls.

Sited art and intervention art meet in the art of the trespass. What is our current relationship to the sites we live in? What representational strategies are contemporary artists using to engage sites? How are sites politically activated? And how are new media framing our consideration of these questions? The contemporary art collective ManifestAR offers one answer,

"Whereas the public square was once the quintessential place to air grievances, display solidarity, express difference, celebrate similarity, remember, mourn, and reinforce shared values of right and wrong, it is no longer the only anchor for interactions in the public realm. That geography has been relocated to a novel terrain, one that encourages exploration of mobile location based monuments,

and virtual memorials. Moreover, public space is now truly open, as artworks can be placed anywhere in the world, without prior permission from government or private authorities – with profound implications for art in the public sphere and the discourse that surrounds it."

ManifestAR develops projects using Augmented Reality (AR), a new technology that – like photography before it – allows artists to consider questions like those above in new ways. Unlike Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality is the art of overlaying virtual content on top of physical reality. Using AR apps on smart phones, iPads, and other devices, viewers look at the real world around them through their phone's camera lens, while the app inserts additional images or 3D objects into the scene. For instance, in the work *Signs over Semiconductors* by Will Pappenheimer, a blue sky above a Silicon Valley company that is "in reality" empty contains messages from viewers in skywriting smoke when viewed through an AR-enabled Smartphone.

AR is being used to activate sites ranging from Occupy Wall Street to the art exhibition ManifestAR @ ZERO1 Biennial 2012 – presented by the Samek Art Gallery simultaneously at Bucknell University in Lewisburg, PA and at Silicon Valley in San Jose, CA. From these contemporary non-sites, and through the papers included in this special issue of LEA, artists ask you to reconsider the implications of the simple question *wayn* (where are you now?)


Richard Rinehart


Director, Samek Art Gallery, Bucknell University

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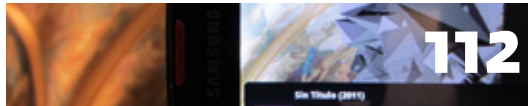
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Mechanics of Place: Textures of Tophane

by

HANA IVERSON &
SARAH DRURY

Hana Iverson
Director, The Neighborhood Narratives Project
hanaiver@gmail.com
<http://hanaiverson.com/>
<http://www.neighborhoodnarratives.net/>

Sarah Drury
Associate Professor of Film and New Media
Temple University
sdrury@temple.edu
http://isc.temple.edu/sdrury/sd/interactive_evokability.html
<http://sct.temple.edu/web/fma/>

Place is always encountered as a flux of temporal and spatial transitions, framed by the past places we have just been and the future places we are moving towards. Augmented Reality through the smartphone constitutes a dual experience where participants can either submit or retrieve site-specific information. These projects can foreground the social, cultural, historical and geographic qualities of the physical location where they are embedded. As such, they suggest a desire to engage the 'placeness' of place – the investment of personal associations with history as a means of layering situated meaning that is designed to enrich, amplify or contradict the experience of the location. Using an array of categories as a conceptual structure, *Mechanics of Place* engages the specific relational dynamics of a particular neighborhood, bringing to the fore the contradictions and conflicts inherent in the mixing of the cultural conditions that are present in a given urban location. Within this relational and multicultural space, situated augmented reality art works provide a new way to enact a hybrid relation to place.

Mechanics of Place is a curated mobile Augmented Reality framework designed by Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury with technologist Craig Kapp, where artists are invited to create situated works for the smartphone. The media produced by the participants is experienced on designated streets in cities where the project is installed. Viewers/users who experience the project on the street follow multiple paths through an

archive of digital data that are made up of audio, text, and/or collaged pictorial forms.

Mobile Augmented Reality functions by geolocating or tagging media to place. "By privileging of the experience of 'here,' it becomes a potent and authentic embodiment of [visual and aural experience] that suggests a unique presence akin to what Walter Benjamin¹ theorized as the notion of the aura of the original work of art. The 'aura' in situated locative media, is the authentic place of a geolocated experience of history or histories."² Building and sharing place-worlds via supporting technological platforms is not only a means of reviving former times, but of revising them. As Jussi Parikka³ argues:

The idea of media as a contraction and folding of time and space underlines the insight that time and space are not just solid and stable back-grounds for action or communication. They are themselves in continuous movement and mutation and are attached to the relations in which they are formed. Nature and media are subsequently to be understood not as distinct ontological regimes but both are to be seen in terms of processuality and becoming in the manner that the recent Deleuzian wave of theory has suggested.

In framing the artistic parameters of *Mechanics of Place*, we ask artist-participants to engage the boundary where the imaginary meets local reality, exploring

Mechanics of Place, 2011, Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury. Mobile Augmented Reality. © Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury, 2011.



the array of cultural projections onto place. Participants in the project are guided to interrogate the issues of community, tourism, urban development and erasure, uncovering ideological differences and personal imaginaries. Once created, the mobile technologies provide the opportunity for *Mechanics of Place* authors and community dwellers to engage with each other via the embedded narratives of the project. The potency of this engagement lies in the ability for the project to support and reflect disagreement across polarized views, which is and has historically been a defining factor in the evolution of community narratives and shared, even if diverging, histories. The ability of these technological platforms and tools to rewrite, subvert and reroute official borders and boundaries by countering officially and at times constraining narratives creates an opportunity for social activism in micro-uses that express or speak to individual experiences.

For *Mechanics of Place: Istanbul*, we focused specifically on a single street in the historic center of the city, Bogazkesen, as a site where traditional culture and more recent gentrifying dynamics converge. Relying in advance upon Turkish friends in the United States for their knowledge and lived experience, we chose Bogazkesen as a site rich in both traditional culture and disjunctive new gentrification.

Istanbul's population explosion has caused a cultural debate, or identity crisis, concerning the word 'Istanbul' itself, as people argue about the true identity of the city and of its inhabitants. We wondered if Bogazkesen Street would allow us entry into a micro-immersive experience of Istanbul culture. Bogazkesen Street is in the district of Beyoglu, on the European side of Istanbul. Beyoglu is the historic heart of Istanbul, located just across the Golden Horn from the main mosques and churches of the Old City, encompassing a number of different neighborhoods that include

the art, entertainment and nightlife center of the city. Beyoglu at the same time is a densely populated residential area, including a range of economic levels and cultural strata, from traditional culture to youth/student culture, and gentrifying classes. The street is long, narrow and winding, stretching from the museum district on the waterfront up a steep hillside to Galatasaray and the hilltop thoroughfare of Istiklal Street. Bogazkesen has also been in the media spotlight due to a violent attack on galleries during an opening in September 2010. These tensions were not evident during the duration of the project, but the number of political demonstrations on Istiklal Street pointed to the dissent and disturbance that is never far from the surface of everyday life. Bogazkesen Street provided a "situated context where the history, culture and physical geography of the location provided the constraints that affected the choice of actions and interactions"⁴ of experiencing the project. Although the site of conflicts stemming from the dynamics of gentrification, Bogazkesen also offered a surprisingly welcoming person-to-person experience, creating an identifiable feedback that helped refine the conceptual and technological design of the project. During the week the project was installed, we met some of the local inhabitants of Bogazkesen's small historic houses and apartment buildings. They included a diverse range of people, such as; traditional Muslim families with women in 'chador,' small business owners living above and behind their stores, foreign-born local artists and filmmakers, gallery owners and others.

Our workshop participants were local artists and students who brought their own practices to the project. In some cases, these included critical positions that grew specifically from the contradictions and conflicts of life in Istanbul. One artist, Petek Kizilelma created an AR graffiti work, addressing the Turkish government's censorship of the internet, including the banning of 138 words considered obscene or suggestive



of pornographic content. These words in translation include: skirt, sister-in-law, gay and animal. Petek's project for *Mechanics of Place* countered the act of censorship by placing the banned language, via the AR platform, on the walls of the city, as painted/stenciled graffiti. The hybrid arena of wireless technology provided the opportunity to circumvent the censorship of web or physically materialized ideas and language. Kerem Ozcan, an industrial designer and academic from Istanbul, constructed fictional characters, "born in a parallel universe" during the timeline of "a series of population exchanges and pogroms in Istanbul against the non-muslim communities in the first decades of the newly founded Turkish republic."⁵ These pogroms were most acute during the 1920s and 1950s. According to Kerem:

"Due to the post-wwi population exchanges in the early 1920s and pogroms in the 50s, minorities in Turkey were forcefully removed from their residences in Turkey. Many intellectuals, craftsmen and artists who were once part of the colorful scene of Istanbul were expelled from their homes, which has led to a serious irreversible cultural impoverish-

Mechanics of Place, 2011, Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury. Mobile Augmented Reality, participating artist Kerem Özcan. © Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury, 2011.

ment for Turkey. The Tophane neighborhood in Istanbul, one of the locations where "Mechanics of Place" takes place, was one of those districts [with a large minority population]. This set of works asks "What if" the minorities were never forced out. The suggested answer is a set of fictional biographies of people who could have been born in Istanbul.. and had their footsteps on earth enrich [Istanbul culture] by their multicultural background."

Kerem created a fictitious Armenian archaeologist, Dr. Hayk Avakian and constructed images and biographical information as well as documentation of Dr. Avakian's contributions to the field of Turkish archaeology. This pseudo-historical data appears through the *Mechanics of Place* interface, tagged to locations on Bogazkesen Street. Kerem's vision was to "position the buildings as the places [where his fictional characters] were born and raised." Kerem's works were intended to reflect on the waves of reactionary violence that have punctuated Istanbul's long history as a site of geographic, political and cultural conflicts, and to mourn the city's lost opportunities for ethnic diversity and intercultural dwelling.

Another *Mechanics of Place* participant, Teoman Madra, a conceptual artist with an extensive background in digital imagery and algorithmic effects, pursued his practice of spontaneous assemblage as a counter statement to the commodity valuation of the art world. His work, dense clusters of multiple images became more potent when situated near or on the galleries located on the street, a few blocks away from the Istanbul Modern museum. Since the Modern museum was hosting the Istanbul Biennial, any Augmented Reality work could be read as a critical statement directed toward the international art market. Rather than addressing cultural contradictions internal to Turkish society, Madra's practice resists characterization as traditionally or non-traditionally Turkish, which



Mechanics of Place, 2011, Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury.
Mobile Augmented Reality, participating artist Teoman Madra.
© Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury, 2011.

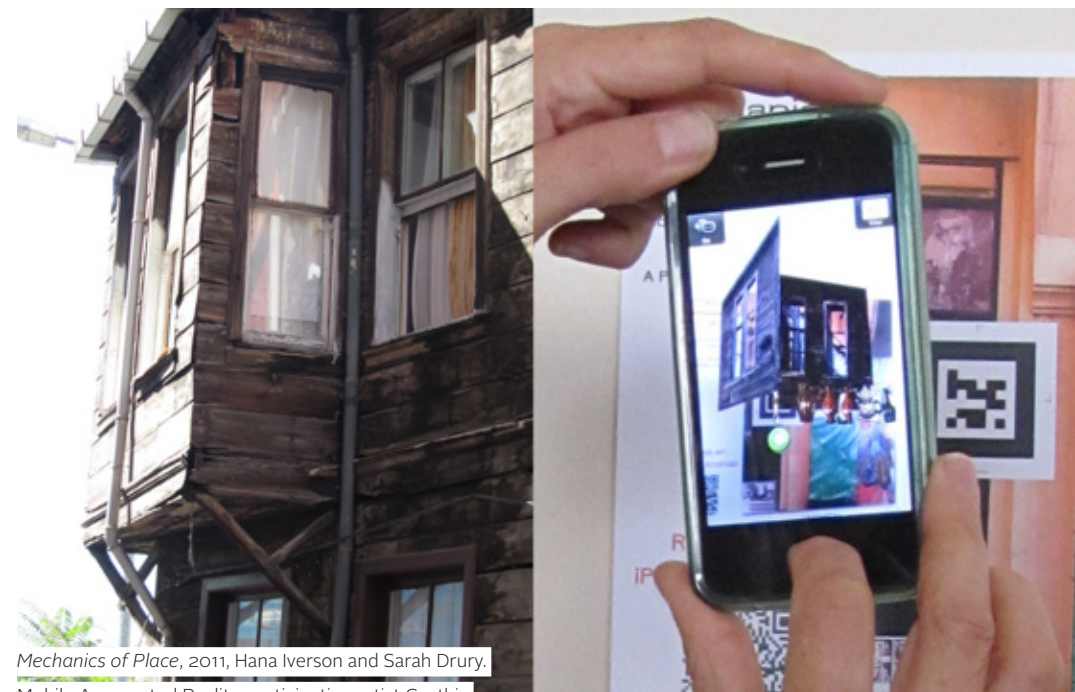
blended with the architecture, augmenting the place with an imaginary reality, like but not like, the real. In Cynthia's work, the meaning of place itself becomes re-inscribed through the spatial interventions of the technology, where place is amplified, experienced in its duality and fictionalized in its interpretation. This mini-fiction, retained its relationship to the real through the deconstruction and reconstruction of identifying elements. The spatial component of this multi-layered continuum of experience attempted to convey "a sense of being there." In Cynthia's case, it was a means to create a sense of 'being here' as she was as new to the environment as we were. Cynthia's project is an example of what could be referred to as "embedded cinema." This "collect and reflect approach" is part of what we envisioned "in the evolving collection of media sequences that could be created by a diverse set of makers over time, resulting in a truly layered window into place."⁶ This vision supported the idea of a situated context, where the cities involved in the project would also reveal their unique character and become part of a dialog between places.

Siegfried Zielinski, in his essay "Backwards to the Future," speculates that "the cinema of the future will be a time machine in a much more radical and comprehensive sense than all these medial levels: a machine namely that not only enables us to travel through time using our imagination but also using our bodies."⁷ If cinema in any sense is media of illusion, these small screen works combine with place to create time shifts, space shifts and meaning shifts by gathering small bits of information that can have an evocative sensory quality. Yet, in a project like *Mechanics of Place*, there are multiple narrative and visual concepts at play, bumping into each other and overlapping. At a given marker, what is revealed is the media that are connected with the conceptual structure of the system – the database of associative terms – that the participants choose as tags when entering the development

in itself is a reflection of the way in which globalization informs and shapes art and media art practices.

American media artist Cynthia Beth Rubin, another workshop participant has a long history in the development of various digital tools. Cynthia used the architecture of Bogazkesen to engage with layers of history, media and cultural associations. Her work began with a photograph of the one remaining wooden house on the street. Virtually all Ottoman-era houses built in Istanbul were made of wood; until the 20th century Constantinople were still predominantly a "wooden city." The wooden house on Bogazkesen Street was not one of the grander Ottoman era structures. It was a simple structure, in contrast to the other houses in the neighborhood that reflected a European character. These architectures were so various and shared the contrasting cultures of the life we experienced in the neighborhood.

Rubin's work, by engaging site-specifically with the locale, created a visceral shift of perception. In Cynthia's work, the technologies did not feel like they sat on top of the experience of the street, but, in fact,



Mechanics of Place, 2011, Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury.
Mobile Augmented Reality, participating artist Cynthia Beth Rubin. © Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury, 2011.

platform of the project. The shaping of an internal semantic framework to structure the media creates collisions and disjunctions, interruptions and intrusions. For the conceptual structure of some of these projects to be fully read and understood, they may function better as individual projects. As a collection of works within one framework, they form a secondary experience, inverted mechanics, creating a sense of no-place. In trying to organize a thematic structure, we created an overlaying system of "flows" akin to those referred to by Deleuze and Guattari. "They articulate a space of electric flows that function in an amorphous continuum, where the 'flow enters into a relationship with another flow, such that the first defines a content and the second, an expression. The deterritorialized flow of content and expression are in a state of conjunction or reciprocal precondition that constitutes figures as the ultimate units of both content and expression."⁸ In the environment of mobile augmented reality, these flows enable the recombining of language within what Bill Seaman refers to, in his essay, "Interactive Text and Recombinant Poetics," as a "mutable context of neighboring media elements, media-processes, physical environments and operative code functionalities."⁹ Yet, despite all the potential poetics within the technological system, the cultural

experience of place – its social and political histories and context – is what informs our perception and experience of the media or cinematic space.

As the *Mechanics of Place* project grows and the collection of media becomes fuller and richer, created in multiple cities, the project can convey events and experience that are tied to location and at the same time reference faraway locations simultaneously. These experiences will divide into intervals, and divide cultural representations into micro-elements that can be mixed with real place. Locative technologies are part of the "new quality of time machines" that are building a future of "expanded reality."¹⁰ ■

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HANA IVERSON & SARAH DRURY

interviewed by
Lanfranco Aceti & Richard Rinehart

Is there an 'outside' of the Art World from which to launch critiques and interventions? If so, what is the border that defines outside from inside? If it is not possible to define a border, then what constitutes an intervention and is it possible to be and act as an outsider of the art world? Or are there only different positions within the Art World and a series of positions to take that fulfill ideological parameters and promotional marketing and branding techniques to access the fine art world from an oppositional, and at times confrontational, standpoint?

The idea of an "art world" as separate from the world reinforces the notion that the art market in concert with galleries and cultural institutions and their associated curatorial pedagogy form a cluster that defines who is included and who is excluded from discussion and participation. The complexity of many socially engaged practices, cultural, art and otherwise, often stands apart from the consumerism of culture. Is "art world" not a marketing phrase intended to create a sense of belonging by which to encourage a kind of buy-in to a system of values supporting consumerism? Socially engaged art, which in many cases falls in the domain of the public, contains histories of performance, pedagogy, sociology, ethnography, linguistics, community and public practices. Rather than propose a system (an art world), there are temporalities and situations that are necessary to make participation in these events/movements possible and resonant. The various practices of participatory art have served in

different ways to enlarge the consideration of art and aesthetics for the past 30+ years. Geotagged media experience circumvents physical and social borders; yet this does not make it the first "interventionist" practice, and so it should be looked at in the context of interventionist practices and situations and conditions which they subvert.

Even the terms inside and outside are conditioned by these systems of valuation, as we are all in a state of becoming-insiders and becoming-outsiders all the time – questioning the idea of fixed spaces – physical or mental – that serve to define a "world." Such definitions imply a consensus. Distributed and collectively authored media have pointed to the fissures in the construction of consensus. These works are both inside the network that allows them to be distributed to the smartphone and outside the boundaries of human movement as well as social and political systems – they can be located where people cannot go, they can contain ideas and inhabit spaces (mental and physical) that would be censored or limited in the physical world.

"In *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida describes the *parergon* (*par-*, around; *ergon*, the work), the boundaries or limits of a work of art. Philosophers from Plato to Hegel, Kant, Husserl, and Heidegger debated the limits of the intrinsic and extrinsic, the inside and outside of the art object." (Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window: From Alberti to Microsoft* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 13.) Where then is the inside and outside of the virtual artwork? Is the artist's 'hand' still inside the artistic process in the production of virtual art or has it become an irrelevant concept abandoned outside the creative process of virtual artworks?

Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin in their book, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* discuss the idea of

tion to a physical place. For these works, the context of the experience is as important as the craft of production.

Virtual interventions appear to be the contemporary inheritance of Fluxus' artistic practices. Artists like Peter Weibel, Yayoi Kusama and Valie Export subverted traditional concepts of space and media through artistic interventions. What are the sources of inspiration and who are the artistic predecessors that you draw from for the conceptual and aesthetic frameworks of contemporary augmented reality interventions?

Gordon Matta-Clark has served as an inspiration with the notion of his "torn exteriors." Matta-Clark's rips and tears "sensitize the viewer to the world around them, to the structural and social glue that holds disparate elements together" (OUROUSSOFF, N. in *The NY Times* 3/3/2007) In the same way, the works of Mobile AR have the same value – they work on the dematerialization of the art object – and they function as site-specific in a way that can dramatize the instability of place – the slippages of time, and the shifts of commonalities or shared identities.

Another major influence has been the work of Kryzstof Wodizcko with his reference to critical vehicles. The smartphone can be a way to frame, on a small scale, the types of large scale architectural projections that he created throughout Europe. The idea of a critical vehicle, such as his *Alien Staff*, was a way to broadcast the doubled self, to create visibility for the invisible. These same ideas are referenced with the relationship to invisibility and visibility by means of a portable device, with the use of architectures as a canvas for reinterpreting the social and personal values of place. Mobile AR provides a means to build upon these ideas and the physical landscape with added collective meaning. We have also been inspired by the work of the Judson Theater of the 1960's, where accepted distinctions between object and event – between sculpture, musical instrument, music and theatrical performance – were dissolved as a new form of art and performance emerged, fueled by the creative energies of David Gordon and Yvonne Rainier. These performances reinvented the relationship between the body of the performer and the eye of the viewer

transparent immediacy, or media proposed as "inter-faceless" and immersive, much like Virtual Reality (VR). On the other hand, hypermediacy is a simple mix or juxtaposition of elements, virtual and real, much like Augmented Reality (AR). While it is true that some VR is capable of being hypermediated, the appeal of VR is largely that it is in fact, immersive, drawing the participant into another world. However, the experience of virtual space is rapidly dissolving into everyday life through mobile devices. Elizabeth Grosz, in her book "Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space" states that this dissolve takes place at the level of the perceptual, where the "change in our perceptions of materiality, space and information, which is bound directly to or indirectly to affect how we understand architecture, habitation and the built environment" (Grosz, E. and Davidson, C. 2001 in Farman, J 2012: 36). For art works created within this hybrid environment, the point is to create works that exist in this delimited realm both perceptually and actually, where the issues of becoming remain continually processual. However, in this sphere, we do question if there are actual limits to the work, edges where the work becomes a discreet entity. Deleuze refers to this in his book "Cinema 2: The Time Image," where he states "the innermost reality is not the whole but on the contrary, a fissure, a crack" (Deleuze, G. 1989).

Craft is now understood as a concept that is separate from the actual use of hands in making things. Traditionally, craft is what is referred to by "the artist's 'hand,'" but in a contemporary understanding, craft comes into play in creative activities from programming to interaction design to audio editing, and beyond. It takes a lot of craft to produce these artworks as they function on multiple levels, but it also takes the participation of a person to access the media in order to complete the experience of the work. Mobile AR works are not static entities, they move through a system of flows and when experienced, exist in rela-

in ways that are brought once again into focus in the embodied experience of mobile media.

In the representation and presentation of your artworks as being 'outside of' and 'extrinsic to' contemporary aesthetics why is it important that your projects are identified as art?

This again relates to the idea of art as a series of processes and social interactions, and a process of transformation. The idea of art as related to fabricating objects or referencing established aesthetics is in contradiction to the realm of possibility for media art. In any case, a more contemporary understanding of art is considered as process, a refractive prism through which parallel, but different ideas and forms can emerge and converge.

In this sense, the questions of "inside" and "outside" asked above become less relevant, because of the possibility of using existing language/image/meanings to re-frame or re-orient, and to move outside of conventions of meaning/physical conventions even momentarily. It is therefore important that our mobile augmented reality artworks in *Mechanics of Place*, individually and as a collection, inscribe unconventional, disjunctive, otherwise-invisible meanings on a given location. They function as art by their freedom to be a refractive prism and by engaging with the landscape to produce new meanings. The potential of the emerging field of mobile art is that it can reconfigure objects, subjects, spaces and times. We hope to suggest that our project functions in a continuum of mobile media art, which is one of the key arenas in which emergent interactions with sensory dimensions of place, and mediated presence, are being explored. Art can challenge and equip us to activate new social practices and performances via "hybrid spaces" that blur the distinction between physical and digital, bodily and virtual, artwork and everyday space, creator and audience.

What has most surprised you about your recent artworks? What has occurred in your work that was outside of your intent, yet has since become an intrinsic part of the work?

The recent shift in art practice that has been explored by both of us, is to become artist-curators. Who are

not only creating works, but creating platforms for participation and dissemination of ideas. This activity has become a central part of the *Mechanics of Place* project, where we invite artists to create works that become part of a database of media that are loosely tied to location and appear in unexpected ways and contexts. We have facilitated a platform for collective participation, and the project is a complete collection of surprises. Such as where the works appear, the relationship of one work to another, the relationship of the works to the locations and the relationships developed in the face to face encounters with the artists, and the surprises of the landscape itself.

Mechanics of Place (MoP) has functioned as a platform for poetic and critical participation of artists in a particular place, inviting them to "annotate" the places they inhabit. The artists' works for *Mechanics of Place* inform us of the nuances of places that we, as artist/curators, are only passing through. The thematic database structure of MoP creates a virtual framework for the artworks, where the works created and associated with a specific city finds associations with those of another city where the project has been co-created. We have been delighted both by the way in which the particularity of the work gain resonance in a given city, and by the disjunctions and dissonances with other works created in other cities in the project. ■

HANA IVERSON

statement & artwork

As an artist with more than twelve years of experience focusing on interactive projects in the public domain,

I am engaged with emergent technologies that integrate networks, mobile media, and interactive installation. New technologies enabled by mobile media in conjunction with global positioning systems (GPS) and the open platforms of web 2.0 provide new means of bringing together concerns with lived space, shrinking distances, transnational alliances, and growing inequalities. They also have the potential to create unexpected relationships and a framework for new modes of embodied engagement.

My early work was based in photography and video, using the body as a nexus of meaning and perception through which I explored the psychological boundaries between the internal and the external: the cognitive, emotional and physical exchange between the human body and the material world. The issues of gender, race and community which were embedded in these early works led to the development of the public installation *View From The Balcony*, where these concerns found physical form in the architecture of place and the social body of location. Through this experience my work made a substantial move into the arena where art builds its meaning upon and with a community or public space.

Mechanics of Place, 2011, Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury. Mobile Augmented Reality, participating artist Cynthia Beth Rubin. © Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury, 2011.



Mechanics of Place, 2011, Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury. Mobile Augmented Reality, participating artist Teoman Madra. © Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury, 2011.

My work has transferred to location-based media as a platform for collaborative practice – engaging other artists or communities into a shared framework, incorporating their contribution into the whole. Working in a new hybrid space of amplified reality provides a new mode of open engagement with embodied experience and public space. Recent projects, such as *Mechanics of Place*, explores small-screen hybrid cinema. Past projects have engaged situated narrative as a means to create multi-layered portraits of small-scale neighborhoods. These mobile works require a kinesthetic sense of bodily motion as the means to perceive the elasticity of temporality, and reflect upon movement-space-media as it is co-created. ■



Mechanics of Place, 2011, Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury. Mobile Augmented Reality. © Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury, 2011.

SARAH DRURY

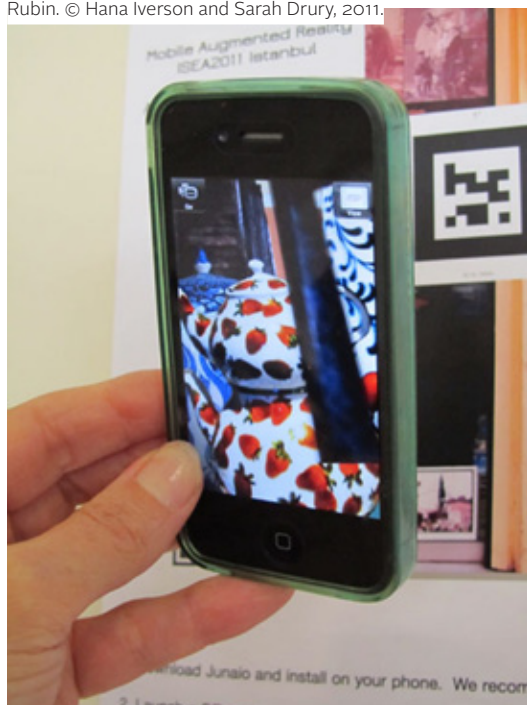
statement & artwork

My work of the past 10 years has explored the subject as a dynamic, fragmentary, emergent instance of mediated presence.

My installation and performance projects have used sensing and tracking technologies to translate input from voice and movement into cinematic interactions, sequenced audio and live generated animation, accompanying the performative body. Some of these projects have pointedly questioned: What is the self? How is the self formed as a social reflection? What is the self as a mediated phenomenon, existing in and around representation?

I am excited to bring this exploration of the dynamic self into the real space of mobile augmented reality. In the paradigm of mobile augmented reality, the viewer catches a glimpse of an emergent image continually re-drawn against a moving landscape. *Mechanics of Place*, a current project collaboratively designed with Hana Iverson, carries this exploration of embodiment into a participatory structure that offers access to a hybrid mobile experience as both creator and viewer. Like Buckminster Fuller's statement, "I seem to be a verb," this notion of the self implies an idea of embodiment that is both material and immaterial, enacted as a transit across physical, technological, social and esoteric planes. ■

Mechanics of Place, 2011, Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury. Mobile Augmented Reality, participating artist Cynthia Beth Rubin. © Hana Iverson and Sarah Drury, 2011.



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